Why Saying “Thank You” Is Better than “Sorry”  
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Aligning Motivation for a Value-Based Sales Strategy  
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How to Communicate During Organizational Change  
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INSIDER: Virtual Selling: A Quick-Start Guide  
Kayla Wilson, MBA

INSIDER: The Catalyst: How to Change Anyone’s Mind  
Kristen Koehler, MBA Candidate
INSIDER: Virtual Selling: A Quick-Start Guide
Kayla Wilson, MBA

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the world was faced with an unprecedented tremor that necessitated a transition from a physical world to a virtual one, immediately altering life (and sales) as we knew it. The professional selling industry was significantly impacted, as the pandemic accelerated the adoption of virtual selling. In Virtual Selling: A Quick-Start Guide to Leveraging Video Technology, and Virtual Communication Channels to Engage Remote Buyers and Close Deals Fast, Jeb Blount provides techniques that turn virtual communication platforms into powerful and effective sales tools, making virtual selling more human and helping organizations acquire a distinct competitive advantage.

It is vital to note that the application and opportunity of virtual selling extends beyond the lifetime of the COVID-19 pandemic. Sellers must continue to leverage the productivity-related advantages of virtual selling, as virtual sales success is independent of the geopolitical, economic, or health climate of the world at large.

THINK POINT #1: Does Virtual Selling Work?

Virtual selling is defined as leveraging virtual communication channels in place of physical, face-to-face interaction. Virtual selling is not about revolutionizing the way you sell, but rather a laser focus on applying virtual selling tools more effectively to engage and connect with other humans while boosting sales productivity. With that, it is vital to emphasize that despite industry misconceptions and seller biases, leveraging virtual selling can boost sales productivity.

Prospects will accept virtual sales calls, but first, sellers must ask.

Along the sales continuum, several channels connect sellers to stakeholders. These channels can be largely classified as synchronous and asynchronous channels, defined as talking with people versus talking at people, respectively. Blount explains it is essential to understand that both techniques are equally important, and their impact is amplified when blended. Blending leverages multiple communication channels, which improves the probability of gaining stakeholder attention and improving sales productivity.
THINK POINT #2: Emotions Matter

Defined as the ability to perceive, correctly interpret, respond to, and effectively manage your own emotions and influence the emotions of others, emotional intelligence is the key that unlocks virtual selling excellence. Considering scientific evidence for the significance of emotional touch, sellers must remember that prospects are buying you before the product or service. They will forget what you said and did, but they will never forget how you made them feel.

Further, the widespread misconception that relationship building is “old school” is plaguing the sales industry; sellers who believe this dangerous narrative turn to the siloed deployment of asynchronous sales channels. Blended strategies maximize sales productivity. However, utilizing synchronous channels provokes natural feelings of discomfort and vulnerability. As such, sellers frequently retreat to asynchronous channels alone and fail massively as sales agents, considering robots can execute these asynchronous touches more efficiently than humans. Thus, sales individuals must build an emotional discipline muscle to assure blended strategies are reflexively deployed. With practice, sellers will disrupt and neutralize the anxiety associated with synchronous communication, their emotional self-control will improve, and blended virtual selling will become more routine.

THINK POINT #3: Video Calls

One of the most highly effective synchronous communication channels is video calling. Video calls represent the closest thing to in-person communication and are immensely cost-effective. Further, video calls make relationship building, problem-solving, and collaboration easier and more effective. To maximize sales success through video calls, sales professionals must remember that humans feel first; as such, it is imperative to provide stakeholders with an ideal emotional experience. Several technical and human elements contribute to the prospects emotional experience:

Technical
- *Audio* – High-quality audio is essential. Invest in a robust internet connection and a professional microphone, and avoid locations with background noise and echoes.
- *Lighting* – Great lighting makes sellers appear natural and accessible, and it illuminates their facial experiences to appear more human and trustworthy. Ideal lighting is attained when sellers face towards natural lighting sources or invest in professional lighting sources that are placed behind the camera.
- *Backdrop* – A seller’s backdrop represents their brand and professional image; consider a virtual backdrop replacement that includes the prospect’s logo for a personal touch.
Human

- **Body language** – There are several elements of body language that must be managed to communicate approachability and trustworthiness including facial expressions and eye contact. Smile with intention and look directly into your camera to communicate eye contact across any physical distance.

- **Attention control** – One inherent weakness of virtual interactions is the ease of distraction, and nothing makes prospects feel more unimportant than being ignored. As such, it is essential to be empathetic and practice active and deep listening.

**THINK POINT #4: Telephone**

During the beginning stages of the coronavirus pandemic, the *New York Times* ran a story about how individuals suddenly rediscovered the telephone, as phone calls deliver a level of intimacy. However, this rediscovery of the humble telephone is disappointing at best, as it illustrated how far the sales profession has fallen. On a large scale, sellers had replaced this virtuous, synchronous communication channel with the siloed use of asynchronous channels. While it is easy to grow content in the misbelief that stakeholders prefer asynchronous communication, sellers must adamantly resist this temptation. Sellers' new golden rule should be, "when in doubt, pick up the phone."

One of the most valuable applications of telephone selling is the prospecting phase of the selling cycle. However, the fear of interrupting prospects is a significant hesitancy of sellers in their deployment of telephone selling. To overcome this fear, sellers must remember that the very nature of selling revolves around interruption; therefore, when you fail to interrupt, you fail to sell. Instead of fearing interruption entirely, sellers must prioritize minimizing the extent of this interruption. Adhering to the following framework can help sellers achieve this goal:

- **Attention** - Get the prospect's attention by using the sweetest word in their world, their name.
- **Identify** - Tell the prospect your name and your company's name.
- **Reason** - Tell the prospect what you want.
- **Because Statement** - Provide the prospect with a compelling reason why they need to meet with you. This statement must be focused on the needs and reasons of the prospect, not yours. Merely providing an elevator pitch will only heighten the prospect's frustrated feelings of interruption.
- **Ask** - With relaxed, assertive confidence, ask for what you want, and stop talking.

**THINK POINT #5: Video Messaging**

To capitalize on the value of blending, sellers must supplement these synchronous channels with the highly effective, yet frequently underutilized asynchronous channel of video messaging. In
video messaging, sellers send short, personalized video messages to their prospects. Considering
the most insatiable human need and craving is to feel important, appreciated, and significant,
personalized video messages are an immensely powerful and compelling communication
channel. Further, virtual messaging is truly unparalleled in its ability; research indicates firms
who deployed this method enhanced their closing rate by over 75%.

Video messaging is versatile and can be leveraged throughout the entirety of the business
development, sales, and account management journeys. Its promising applications include
prospecting, invitations, confirming appointments, and follow-up messages. Regardless of the
application, the potential of video messaging is maximized when messages are short,
spontaneous, and authentic. As such, sellers must provide thoughtful messages that are not
excessively produced. Thirty to 60-second messages are optimal, and the message must contain a
compelling, attention-grabbing hook, relate to the prospect on a personalized level, bridge the
prospect's problems and the seller's solutions, and conclude with a clear call to action that
communicates future contact.

**Real Estate Implications**

At its core, real estate success revolves around effective selling. Real estate professionals must
take the invaluable virtual selling advice of Jeb Blount to heart and implement his practical
advice in daily sales ventures. Remember the imperative of attaining an emotional connection
with your prospect and utilizing blended virtual communication channels at all times. Video
calls, telephone calls, and video messaging are a few of the valuable communication channels
available to sellers. When leveraged and deployed together, sellers can attain profound sales
success.

**Recommended Reading**

Blount, Jeb (2020), *Virtual Selling: A Quick-Start Guide to Leveraging Video Technology, and
Virtual Communication Channels to Engage Remote Buyers and Close Deals Fast*, John Wiley
& Sons, Inc., Hoboken, NJ.

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